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TAGS: MARR ASEC MCAP ML

SUBJECT: MALIAN MILITARY LOOKING FOR 3000 NEW RECRUITS

Classified By: Political Officer Aaron Sampson, Embassy Bamako, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (U) Col. Abdoulaye Coulibaly, the Malian military's Director of Information and Public Relations, told the Embassy on May 23 that the Malian military hoped to enlist 3000 new soldiers during the 2007 recruiting drive that ended last week. Local newspapers reported that many potential recruits had falsified their birthplaces, claiming that they were born in either Gao or Timbuktu, following rumors that the military was actively seeking more individuals from northern Mali.

¶2. (U) Col. Coulibaly stated that, contrary to local media reports, military recruiting goals for 2007 were unchanged from previous years. He explained that since applications from Bamako alone could easily fill the 3000 person recruiting target, the military and Ministry of Plan used a quota system based on local population estimates to assure spaces for each of Mali's 8 regions and the capital of Bamako. According to Coulibaly the quota for the Kidal region, which was at the heart of last year's Tuareg uprising, is around 250. The quotas for the much larger regions of Timbuktu and Gao are fixed at roughly 300 recruits each.

¶3. (U) Coulibaly noted that approximately 200 of Kidal's 250 places for this recruiting cycle would be allotted to demobilized former Alliance for Democracy and Change (ADC) fighters. The remaining 50 places would be filled with individuals from the Kidal region who are presumably not associated with the ADC. Coulibaly said that another 220 former ADC members would be rolled into the 2008 recruiting class from Kidal.

¶4. (U) According to Coulibaly, most of those recruited from Kidal would be assigned to the "special" national guard units created by the Algiers accords to help secure Mali's northern regions of Kidal, Timbuktu and Gao. Coulibaly maintained that the special units were not "all-nomad" units but would contain a balanced number of Tuaregs, Arab/Moors and southern Malians.

¶5. (C) Comment: The creation and staffing of "special" National Guard units gives the appearance that Mali is following through on its commitments to the Algiers Accords, an assumption evidently made by potential recruits willing to fake their home of origin to find a job in uniform. The reality, however, appears to be that Mali has decided not to provide additional resources or positions over its regular recruiting. Limited overall resources likely remain the chief constraint, along with a reluctance on the part of southern Malian military officers to unfairly advantage Northern recruits as compensation for the political troubles created by some of their elders.

McCulley